

Specialist Therapy & Exercise Rehab Gym

West Berkshire Therapy Centre will open as a specialist exercise and rehab gym on 1st April in premises off Lower Way in Thatcham. The Centre will be of interest to anyone whose disabilities make it difficult to take exercise safely, so heading off some of the risks of putting on weight, such as heart or lung problems or diabetes. West Berkshire Neurological Alliance is pleased to have purchased some equipment for the Centre and has pledged further support.

The gym will feature a range of specially designed and adapted power-assisted equipment and will be the first of its type in the South of England. For further information visit www.westberkshiretherapycentre.org.uk and click on 'news', or call John on 01635 33582.

We are equally delighted to report that Swings and Smiles are opening a new service providing recreational facilities for families with special needs children at the Phoenix Centre in Newbury. The voluntary sector remains alive and well!

Berkshire West Federation of CCG's

Readers will be pleased to read that the Berkshire West Federation of CCG's has agreed to complete the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for neurology, a project that was started in 2010 but which the old PCT quietly shelved. We understand that a draft may be available for circulation and comment shortly. The needs assessment will set the scene for

health and social care commissioners to develop a systematic approach to redesigning services for those affected by a neurological condition.

Thames Valley Neuro Network

The Thames Valley Neuro Clinical Network is now in place and the Alliance has taken a seat on the Steering Group. Curiously, the Network had already determined several projects before the first Steering Group meeting and before having agreed a vision. So things are off on an interesting but ad hoc basis, which needs redirection. Our colleagues in East Berks, Bucks and Oxon are equally concerned about this and we look forward a more structured approach being developed.

Coping against the odds

The report on our Focus Group on 'Coping when Health and Social Care systems falter' has now been published. The main recommendations included:
For commissioners

- Consider and tackle the recurring problem, that neuro patients experience a long time to get a diagnosis.
- Design and commission pathways that embrace carer and peer group support.
- Ensure that service specifications include the need for information at all stages.
- Ensure that complaints systems are easy to find, to follow and are transparent.

For professionals

- Check if you have sufficient listening skills and enough knowledge of the individual and the condition you are treating.
- Ask yourself if you would happily use your own service and follow the advice and options you are recommending to others.
- Check if your patients are capable of coping in their current situation.
- Encourage carer and peer group support.

For patients and carers

- At the first sign that the system seems to be failing you, take up all matters of concern with all the constructive vigour you have.
- Seek peer group support and talk about your issues, to help identify options.
- Never accept poor quality information, advice or services.
- Ask someone to look out for you and speak up for you if you do not have the confidence to tackle issues on your own.
- Be aware that to be unwell could be costly, possibly beyond your means, so proceed accordingly.
- Try not to give up!

The Long Term Conditions Board of the CCG Federation has discussed the report and we look forward to a constructive programme of activities to tackle the many issues identified.

Council Cuts

WBNA will be working closely in the coming year with the West Berkshire Disability Alliance (WBDA) to monitor the effect of any cuts made by West Berks Council (WBC) cuts on disabled people. After tabling a series of freedom of information requests to WBC on their

charging policy for social care services, WBDA Chair Mick Hutchins, in a letter to the Newbury Weekly News expressed concerns that local disabled people were bearing an unfair burden re the current freeze on Council Tax rises. The FOI requests revealed that in 2012-13 the Council collected approx. £2.5 million in charges for non-residential services from some 618 clients, or around an average of £4k pa from each client. £2.5m equates to around a 3% rise in Council Tax for every CT payer in West Berkshire.

Conference 2014

Block off your diary for our conference, 'Neuro rehab, facts, fears, future' on March 6th at Wokefield Park. The programme can be viewed at www.wbna.org.uk We are most grateful to the Big Lottery, Englefield Trust, Newbury Town Council and the AMMCO Trust for their sponsorship.

Dates for your diary

Open meeting dates coming up, all at 1.45pm for 2 pm, St Joseph's, Newbury

January 30th Members' open forum.

March 13th Guest speaker Chris Washbrook Clinical Director Berkshire Healthcare Trust

**WBNA Conference 2014:
Neuro rehab, facts, fears, future
Mar 6th 2014, Wokefield Park**

West Berkshire Neurological Alliance

2 Clayhill Crescent Newbury RG14 2NP

Tel: 01635 33582 Fax: 01635 569177

Email: secretary@wbna.org.uk

www.wbna.org.uk

Registered Charity No. 1081021